

Others had another feeling as well, and that is that in the passing over of the top candidate, a Roman Catholic priest, there had to be some other motives that were at issue that were untoward. Frankly, I did not have that view.

I felt that the problem was ignoring the bipartisan consensus for the candidate, that it did not have bipartisan consensus. We did not ask Dr. Wright to our caucus because Dr. Wright was not the issue for us. The process was the issue. The process was the problem.

In reacting to how the Speaker has resolved this matter, we look forward to getting to know Father Coughlin, if I have the name right. He is an individual we have not met. I think we can do better than this going forward.

I would ask each of us to seriously consider a resolution that will be offered this week by the gentleman from California (Mr. DOOLEY) that would call for the selection of the chaplain to be much in the same way as the selection of Inspector General.

At the end of the process, two votes, two for the majority, two for the minority. This is the chaplain of the House. This individual will be our minister. This individual will be our counselor. This individual will be our friend, not just the Speaker, not just the majority, but all of us.

And so next time, we will never let this happen again, next time. I would ask that we pass this resolution, changing the rules by which we deal with the chaplain and so that both sides have equal say.

Perhaps my deepest regret from this is, I felt a lot of good could come from the institution of the chaplain. I still have that hope for the institution and would only echo the Speaker's comments relative to the chaplain and what the chaplain might mean to this institution.

I look forward to working collectively under the newly announced chaplain and with the chaplains to come in the future, should I still be a Member of this body. I do think it might be one institution that can play an important role in restoring a greater degree of civility and trust between us.

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. POMEROY. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. GEPHARDT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I would like to say a few things in regard to what the Speaker said. First, nothing in anyone's mind today is anything but concern for Dr. Wright. I am sorry that it has come to this. And I would hope that we would welcome the new Chaplain that has been appointed by the Speaker and try our level best to make his service in this Congress as positive as it possibly can be. I am very sorry that we have come to this point.

I tried in what we did in our committee with Majority Leader ARMEY and Speaker HASTERT to come to a bipartisan agreement on who the Chaplain would be. I had concerns when the process was announced that it would be maybe difficult to get to a bipartisan selection, but I hoped we could do that.

We have a different view of the facts of what happened in the meetings, but that is not important. When we finally got to the point where there was not complete agreement between all three of us, I asked to come back to the bipartisan committee so that both the Speaker and Dr. Wright knew exactly the feelings of the members of our committee. And I tried in the best way that I could to get those feelings across.

I have never said and never believed that there was bias of any kind in the making of this selection. And I have never said that.

I do believe that in the future, as the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) has just said, we can find a process that will ensure bipartisanship in the selection of this important office. I will certainly work toward that end.

I respect the Speaker's choice, and for my part and our part we will do everything in our power to welcome this new Chaplain and to make his service here a positive force for every Member of this body.

The SPEAKER. For what purpose does the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA) rise?

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, since I was the one who asked Father Tim O'Brien to seek the chaplaincy, I would ask the courtesy of 2 or 3 minutes to make a few comments.

The SPEAKER. We will give the gentleman the courtesy of 2 to 3 minutes, but first let us have the courtesy of swearing in the Chaplain.

APPOINTMENT AS CHAPLAIN OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to 2 U.S. Code, 75a-1, the Chair appoints Father Daniel Coughlin of Illinois to act as and to exercise temporarily the duties of Chaplain of the House of Representatives.

Will Father Coughlin please come forward and take the oath of office.

Father Daniel Coughlin appeared at the bar of the House and took the oath of office, as follows:

Do you solemnly swear that you will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that you will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that you will take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; that you will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which you are about to enter. So help you God.

□ 1645

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LAHOOD). Before we return to the Committee of the Whole, the Chair intends to recognize the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA) for 5 minutes and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY) for 5 minutes.

Without objection, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KLECZKA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

COMMENTS ON FATHER TIM O'BRIEN

Mr. KLECZKA. Mr. Speaker, I join with all of you in welcoming our new Chaplain, Father Coughlin, to the House of Representatives.

What I would like to do is spend a few moments not reopening the wounds of this, what I would term a sorry chapter in the House of Representatives, but I take the floor today to defend a family friend, a person who I asked to think about running for the post of Chaplain of the House of Representatives, Father Tim O'Brien, who I have known for over 30 years.

Father Tim O'Brien comes from the State of Wisconsin, born on a family dairy farm in Eden, Wisconsin. His ordination was from St. Francis Seminary in my district in Milwaukee. He was an associate pastor in a parish in my district. He went on to complete his education and received a doctorate, and he is a professor at Marquette University.

Because of his love of politics and this House and teaching young minds, he started on his own the Les Aspin Institute named after our former colleague Les Aspin. His intention in starting this program was to bring students from Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, here to Washington, DC, to work in our offices, to work for the agencies, to possibly work for some lobby firms, to get a hands-on feel for what the government is all about, so when they graduate and start their livelihood, in no matter what job it might be, they will understand what goes on here, and hopefully they will be a better citizen, hopefully they will be a better voter, or a voter, and possibly they might run for office.

Mr. Speaker, one of those interns who was in my office who has graduated from Marquette was the first Hispanic elected to the State legislature in Wisconsin who hales from my district. So I think the program is working.

So I said to Father O'Brien, "Because of your love of the institution and government, consider becoming our Chaplain," and he did. He put his nomination and his application in, and in every step of the process he came out on top.

Oh, I tracked this process like a hawk. I talked to every member of that screening committee. How did Father O'Brien do? And you know what I heard repeatedly, time after time? Home run. A triple. Best of the lot. And, in the final analysis, he was the top pick of the committee.

Now, was that related to the leaders who made the choice of someone other than him? Yes. The gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) admitted that even though the formal paper did not have the ranking, he verbalized it, and so did the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY). So to say that we did not know who was the top candidate is not accurate.

One of the Republican leaders said, My gosh, I did not know the denominations of the candidates. That is not accurate. I personally talked to that leader on at least two occasions on the floor. I am just so hesitant to go and try to correct all the misstatements, because I think that opens up the issue again.

I want closure, like you. But here we have this Catholic priest, who just thought he would like to be the Chaplain. He thought he could do well for all of us in the House. And, since that time, he has been greatly maligned.

In Roll Call last week we read, Well, he does not have enough counseling experience. Well, he can weather that, because we all know as a colonel in the Army Reserves he counsels enlisted and officers every day he is on duty. As a faculty member, he counsels students and other faculty. He has counseled me and continues to do so. So it is not the idea of counseling.

But to go after this Catholic priest, who did nothing but want to be the Chaplain. There were rumors leaked, and I cannot point fingers because I do not know where they came from, that his home in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, was purchased with some Federal funds. Naturally, the reporters descend on the poor guy like locusts. Is that true? Is it true? Is that true? Actually, it was not true.

He absconded with some money from a drug and alcohol program, one which he has never run, and the reporters again called him and descended. Is it true?

It is not, because I never was involved in such a program. I never got any funding. So I know full well that throughout the process this individual and his reputation have suffered also.

So, today, Mr. Speaker, we close the book on this sad chapter. But I ask my Republican colleagues not to rewrite history, because that we should not do. But I think there are some in this body that owe Father Tim O'Brien an apology. As we go on from today, I think I can be confident that not only Father Tim O'Brien has been vindicated, but a lot of us, with the appointment of our new Chaplain.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. BLILEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

COMMENTS ON SELECTION OF HOUSE CHAPLAIN

Mr. BLILEY. Mr. Speaker, I, too, was not prepared to speak today, by I think the record does need some correction.

We met, as my cochair, the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY), said, we had endless meetings. We narrowed the 38 to 17. We narrowed those to six. Then we decided, we at the next meeting, we would reduce the six to three. We interviewed the 17, and then we re-interviewed the six.

We decided that we would send them, and "we" as a group, without instructions from the leadership on either side of the aisle, that we would send the names to the leadership unranked, and, as the Speaker said, in alphabetic order. And that is exactly what we did.

Now, the gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) and I met with the Speaker, the majority leader and the minority leader in the Speaker's rooms, and we presented the three names. The gentleman from North Dakota (Mr. POMEROY) and I both said we personally thought that Father O'Brien was the best. But that was our personal opinion, that was not the statement from the committee. The committee clearly intended that the decision be made by the three leaders, without any bias for what we had done. Our job was to go out and advertise, bring in applicants, interview them, narrow the field to three, and send the names up to be picked by the leadership.

This Speaker should be commended for opening the process. Three of the last four Democrat Speakers were Catholic. They never considered a priest. Over 50 years of the last 60-some in the history of this House, the Democrat party has been in charge. They never considered a priest.

So I think that we have said enough. The record was we did not rank these people, and the decision was to be made by the leadership without bias.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET—FISCAL YEAR 2001

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. UPTON). Pursuant to House Resolution 446 and rule XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 290.

□ 1655

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the

further consideration of the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 290) with Mr. LAHOOD (Chairman pro tempore) in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore. When the Committee of the Whole House rose earlier today, 40 minutes of debate remained on the subject of economic goals and policies.

The gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) has 17½ minutes remaining, and the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) has 22½ minutes remaining.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, before we were delayed for the proceedings that just concluded, I was involved with the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK) in carrying out the statutory rights that we have as members of the Joint Economic Committee to discuss the budget in the context of our economy and the various aspects of the economy that may have something to do with policies of our government.

I would like to turn to another subject. I discussed Fed policy at some length earlier, and I would like to spend a few minutes discussing one other set of issues that had to do with the potential effect of high oil prices on the economy as we move forward.

As I said before, overall economic conditions are strong. Rising oil prices and gasoline prices are one of several economic issues, however, that concerns millions of Americans.

This week Energy Secretary Richardson began a trip to OPEC nations to try to convince them to lower sky-high oil and gas prices. I believe the administration should release some oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, like several other Members do, but there is another source of pressure also available to help American consumers.

A review of the situation reveals that U.S. taxpayer dollars are being provided to nations involved with the OPEC conspiracy to raise oil and gas prices. Consumers across America are outraged when they pull up to the pump and view each day or each week the rapid price increase in home heating fuel and gasoline prices over the last few months. In the section of the country where I live, that is the Northeast, I am from New Jersey, of course, we are especially hard hit because of our dependence on home heating oil.

OPEC's supply restrictions are a primary reason for these price hikes, I think all Americans know that today, and many Americans are justifiably angry at the oil producing nations and their allies. These citizens would be even more angry if they knew their hard-earned tax dollars were being funneled to key oil producing nations by the United States Government. That is